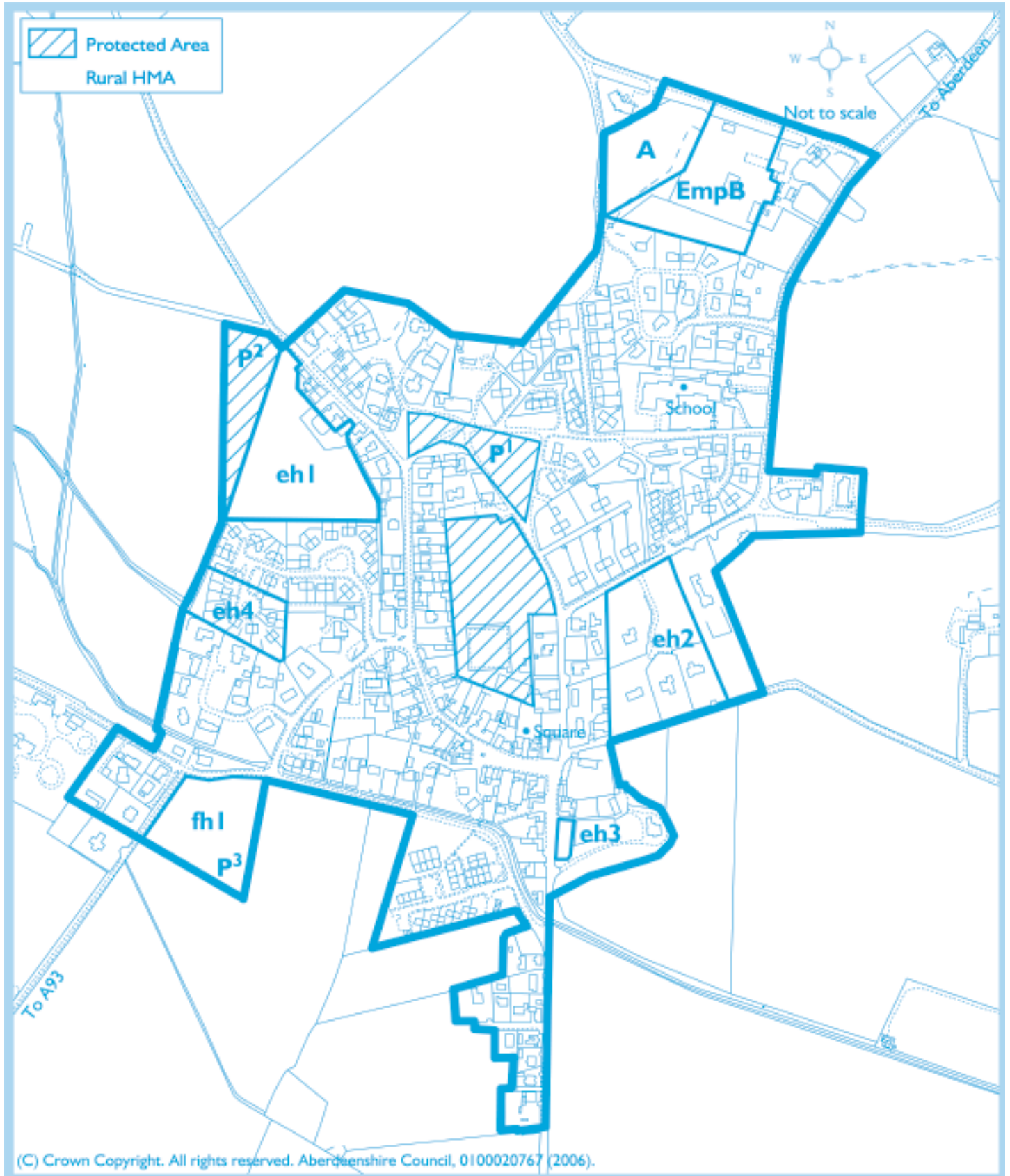




Tarland Community Action Plan



The above map is from the 2006 Aberdeenshire Local Plan, soon to be replaced by a new Aberdeenshire Development Plan. The areas marked EH2, 3 and 4 have all been developed.

In 2009, the people of Tarland were invited to give their views on the future of the village.

The immediate incentive was a request by Aberdeenshire Council for contributions to the Local Development Plan. Its officials wanted to draw upon local knowledge and opinion to help them designate areas where new houses and business premises can be built over the next few years.

But the **Your Tarland - Have Your Say** event presented a timely opportunity for a wider consultation about all aspects of life in the Community.

Tarland, like any village heading into the second decade of the 21st century, faces new and sometimes difficult challenges. What should be done to bring new jobs to the area? What sort of houses should be built and how many? How can the beauty of the area be enhanced to increase tourism? Is the local infrastructure adequate? What is needed, in the way of learning opportunities, healthcare and leisure facilities, to improve the lives of young and old? More than 250 people, from pensioners to Youth Club members and primary pupils, seized the chance. Their ideas, aspirations, and criticisms form the basis of this Community Action Plan, which has been drawn up by Cromar Community Council with the help of the Marr Area Partnership.

Through this plan, all those who can help this Community to shape the future of Tarland, including Aberdeenshire Council, local landowners and government agencies, will know the views and wishes of the people who live here and be encouraged to support them. Many of the topics raised will be implemented through the new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/localplan) and the Marr Community Plan (www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk)

But this Community Action Plan is just the beginning. Over the next three years, the Community Council will be organising more consultations to monitor progress and start new initiatives. The Tarland Blog (www.tarland.org.uk) will also act as a forum.



The Square.



The Bridge.



The West End looking towards the hills.



The Wheelwright.



Harvest 1964.



The Woodyard.

Around 1795, *The First Statistical Account of Scotland* recorded that Tarland consisted of upwards of 40 houses containing 150 souls. It held one weekly market, and six other annual markets at which 'the most important commercial business of the country was transacted.' The village also had four merchant's shops, an inn 'with good accommodation for travelers,' three or four licensed premises, a shoemaker, a butcher, a saddler, a dyer, a house carpenter, a gardener, a blacksmith, a wheelwright and two or three carriers.

Outside of the village trade, agriculture employed the majority of the people, although the *Account* notes that 'many numerous families have gone from Tarland to Aberdeen.'

Fast forward to 1840, and the *Second Statistical Account* records that 'Tarland is the only market town in the local parishes.' Although the weekly market had been discontinued, the number of annual markets had increased to seven, at which 'much of the commercial intercourse of the district is promoted.' The number of houses had increased to 68, there was one more ale house, and the village had gained a post office, four more shops, a library, a savings bank and a mill.

A new turnpike road connected Tarland to Aberdeen and facilitated the sock knitting trade, with Aberdeen merchants bringing the raw materials to home workers and returning with the finished goods. However, agriculture remained the principal employer.

Tarland's commercial dominance ended in 1854, when the railway reached Aboyne. Aberdeen's markets were opened up to local agriculturists and Tarland's markets were no longer required.

Much of the land surrounding the village passed into the ownership of the MacRobert family in the 1930s, and the estate is now run by the MacRobert Trust.

The sock knitting trade no longer flourishes in Tarland, but the village still has many businesses catering to the needs of a wide surrounding area. These include two grocers, a pharmacy, a toy shop, a kiltmaker, a post office, a garage and, for the 21st century, a digital video company.

The recently-restored prehistoric stone circle of Tomnaverie and the spectacular hills on the edge of the Howe of Cromar are magnets for tourists and walkers. Two pubs, a caravan park, and a café/gallery look after their needs and those of other visitors to Royal Deeside.

Sporting facilities include curling on the village's floodlit pond, tennis, golf, swimming and bowls. The MacRobert Hall is used by a wide range of local groups and also hosts functions, plays, concerts, a local market and other activities. In August, the Tarland Show provides a popular showcase for local farmers. A flourishing History Group, a Youth Club and the Tarland Development Group are among the many organisations which ensure that Tarland remains a lively and enterprising Community.

What people said

What we like

'Tarland is truly a beautiful village, unique for its surroundings.'

'I like how peaceful Tarland is.'

'Marked paths for walking are excellent.'

'I like the park because it is so big and has lots of things to play on.'

'We should shout about what we have – it's all good.'

What we dislike

'There is too much litter.'

'The Square could be made more attractive'

'Parking in the Square is getting increasingly unsafe.'

'The village has an unkempt feel about it.'

Child's eye view

'I like the fact that there are lots of places to go for walks.'

'I like the woods because they are fun.'

'I like all the activities on in Tarland.'

'I dislike the litter on the ground.'

'There are not enough people to play with.'

'I like Tarland, tennis, nature, Douneside pool and the scenery.'



The War Memorial.



The West End.



Better transport links..



Facilities.



Local food production.



Protection of green areas.

At the consultation, the people of Tarland were asked about their hopes for the future of the village. Here are some of the items on their wish-list:

- A thriving, united, self-supporting Community with facilities for all ages
- Local employment opportunities to reduce commuting
- No inappropriate development to spoil the village's character
- More affordable housing for local people
- Protection of the green areas in and around Tarland to encourage tourism and outdoor activities
- Better transport links, especially bus services, to Aboyne, Banchory and Aberdeen
- Encouragement of local food production

The main priorities are:

- **Affordable Housing**, especially for young people and the elderly
- **More Jobs** to sustain the local economy
- **A Better Environment** to attract visitors and to make Tarland a greener and safer place
- **Improvements to Facilities**, especially the MacRobert Hall

In 2008, the MacRobert Trust commissioned a Housing Needs Survey from the Rural Housing Service. Around half the people in Tarland responded.

The survey revealed that the majority of people in the village (65%) own their houses. They tend to be the older members of the Community.

Younger people rent homes, live in tied accommodation, or share houses with family or friends.

A key conclusion of the survey was:

Tarland has difficulty holding on to its young population. This may be due to lack of employment opportunities or further education, but may also be due to lack of suitable housing leading to people in this age-bracket having to move to a more suitable area. Many villagers felt that young people have little or no hope of obtaining affordable housing.

Statistics gathered by the Rural Housing Service bear this out:

- 85 of Tarland's 336 homes are provided by Social Housing. Of the 61 owned by Aberdeenshire Council, only 6 were available in 2006/7. In 2007/8 there were 19 applicants for 8 re-lets.
- 15% of replies to the survey came from people in tied or rented homes. 'A significant number' – almost 1 in 5 - of them said they had housing

needs. The most-quoted reason was that they wanted to live independently.

- House prices have doubled since 2001. In 2006, the average price in Tarland was £171,676.

Comments from the consultation show that the Community shares the Rural Housing Service's belief that

'there is a significant housing need within Tarland. It is not only people in housing need that recognise the lack of affordable housing options in Tarland. 95% of the respondents [to the survey] indicate that there is a need for low-cost housing.'

Thus, the proposal to develop the site at Village Farm was generally welcomed, in the hope that housing needs, now and over the next few years, will be satisfied with a generous provision of affordable housing, both for sale and to rent.

There was a call, too, for more housing for old people: reflecting the age of Tarland's population, which is higher than the Scottish average.

But there were also worries that too many new houses would spoil the character of the village and that 'Tarland will lose its identity, as the village will become merely a commuter housing area for Aberdeen.'

Few wanted large housing estates like those at Aboyne.

The Community would prefer the village to grow by 5 or 6 houses each year: the present rate.

Many wanted to 'keep the green areas within the village.' They agreed that it was 'very important to maintain Tarland's uncluttered feel: this is a village not a suburban outlier.'

'New housing should be well-designed and well-landscaped, not all squashed together,' was another typical comment.

Thus, there were concerns about land being sold to 'outside' developers, whose mass-market house designs might not be in keeping with the building traditions of the village:

'I strongly believe that housing development needs to be client-led rather than developer-led. Well-screened plots with land for gardens and out-buildings would suit a local requirement that cannot be met by developer-designed housing.'

There was a plea for better architecture:

'Too many houses are heavy, clumsy imitations of what people think is traditional. It would be great not to have the usual box house dotted into its wee bit of garden.'

‘Houses should fit into local vernacular architecture.’

These views echo those expressed in the last Community action plan, the *Tarland Village Design Statement*, issued in 2000.

Where practicable, the Community would like to see the *Statement’s* guidelines followed in the future:

‘Use local natural stone and timber wherever possible in all new developments.

‘Discourage the use of synthetic materials such as plastic windows and doors etc.

‘Maintain the existing low scale of buildings wherever possible.

‘Consider each development on its merits, setting and relationship to surrounding buildings.

‘Retain steep pitched roofs ... Avoid the use of “Kit House” details and use simple, traditional eaves and verge details wherever possible. Encourage the use of chimneys.’

Action:

In the interests of ensuring excellence in the built environment, Cromar Community Council will instigate a dialogue between builders, developers and Tarland residents, not only in the debate over the forthcoming Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, but also during the planning process in succeeding years.

The Community Council will also pursue the long-mooted possibility of the centre of the village becoming a Conservation Area.

Tarland: Mapping Our Future

The Community has also indicated which areas of the village they thought would be suitable for development in the future, and also which areas it would like to see protected.

A majority wished to preserve the rural aspect of the approach to Tarland from Aboyne, and rejected a suggestion that a large-scale development might be sited there.

They preferred the idea of small-scale developments on ‘infill’ sites within, or close to, the existing boundaries of the village.

The reaction to the idea of a continuing care Community next to the nursing home at Alastrean House was cautious, in the absence of detailed plans. Some members of the Community were concerned at the possible effect on wildlife and the walks which attract visitors to the village, while others saw job opportunities. Some called for more affordable housing for old people.

The Community believes that there is a pressing need for new jobs in Tarland:

‘There is no place for any new business to start up. Why should all development be houses?’ was typical of the many comments on this subject.

‘Rentable premises for small businesses or workshops’ must be built.

There is disappointment that there has been no progress in bringing workshops, offices and other commercial business units to the area already designated for commercial activity: the former MacRobert Trust estate yard.

This will help ensure that young people will stay in the village and discourage commuting to Aberdeen and elsewhere.

Action:

The provision of these workplaces is now **an urgent priority** if Tarland is to continue to be a prosperous and sustainable Community.

The Community will be proactive in suggesting to landowners how businesses could be persuaded to open in Tarland or relocate to the village. This will be the subject of the next **Your Tarland - Have Your Say** to be held in 2010.

In co-operation with the Tarland Development Group, the Community Council will take steps to stimulate the production of food locally and to promote greater support of existing shops, services and other businesses in the area.

While the Community recognises the need to use, or, otherwise, lose local businesses, it regards the village Post Office, the garage and the pharmacy as particularly essential services which must be retained.

We hope to enlist the support of Aberdeenshire Council and Visit Scotland in promoting local tourism:

‘Tarland has superb walking, cycling and riding. Properly marketed this could attract many more visitors.’



Existing shop.



Local business.



Toy shop.

There is a high level of interest in all aspects of the environment of the Howe of Cromar, and the Community is keen to protect and improve it still further.

New waymarked walking routes, an all-abilities path in Alastrean Woods and the creation of a wetland area are among the successful innovations of recent years, but the people of Tarland hope for more.

Proposals by developers to site wind turbines overlooking the village have met with opposition, but small-scale renewable energy projects would be welcome.

Environmental awareness is also reflected in calls for an anti-litter campaign, particularly in local woods.

Traffic control and road safety measures are needed throughout the village, particularly in Tarland square and Bridge Street.

Action:

Energy conservation will be actively encouraged, and renewable schemes which do not affect the character of the village should be investigated and promoted.

More trees should be planted around new houses.

With the help of the Cromar History Group, we plan to celebrate the Howe of Cromar's rich heritage. We support the Tarland Development Group's plans to make this more accessible with an archaeological trail linking landmarks like Tomnaverie Stone Circle and Culsh earth house.

The Community Council will encourage developers and planners to set aside land for allotments to encourage people to grow their own flowers and vegetables.

The Community Council will continue to support the Tarland Development Group's Community composting scheme. This valuable contribution to our environment is already in underway, but will require support from individuals and local organisations to come into being.

Aberdeenshire Council will be asked to take the necessary measures to improve road safety. These include 'painting out' the corner of the Square, moving the speed limit sign at the northern end of Aberdeen Road, and investigating the possibility of building a footpath to the Knappieround Car Park.

The Community Council will also seek the advice of the police on these and other issues essential to Tarland's well-being.

After extensive local consultations, the Tarland Welfare Trust has published ambitious plans for the refurbishment of the MacRobert Hall. The 1950s building is now badly in need of upgrading to ensure it regains its place at the heart of the Community.

Suggestions for new uses include a programme of evening classes, a permanent display area for the Tarland History Group's popular collection of photographs, documents, and historic memorabilia, and a video conferencing link to allow participation in Aberdeen University courses. Most-wanted facilities include better stage lighting, a piano and an energy-efficient heating system.

Some village facilities, on the other hand, are under-used, especially the Community website:
www.tarland.org.uk.

In recent years, the Tarland Development Group has notched up an impressive track-record in providing new facilities for the village and its surrounding area. Many of them, notably the creation of a network of way-marked paths, have also benefited the village's economy, as has a market held twice-yearly in the MacRobert Hall selling food and crafts from local producers.

The TDG is now working on proposals for a cycle route to Aboyne and an archaeological trail.

Transport links to Aboyne and Banchory have been improved, but many members of the Community wish to see bus links better co-ordinated with other services in Aboyne. Young people want more late-night services from Aboyne and Aberdeen. The Community Council seeks more feedback on this before presenting the Community's views, needs and ideas to the relevant authorities.

Action:

The Community has pledged its enthusiastic support for the TDG's projects and for the plans to modernise the MacRobert Hall. The Community and Hall user-groups are supporting Tarland Welfare Trust in fundraising, and applications for grants and donations will be made to raise the necessary funds.

This booklet is one of a series produced by Local Rural Partnerships together with the Community under the banner Making It Real.

The initiative is sponsored by Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership and Shell, and run by Aberdeenshire Community Economic Development Co-ordinators Forum. The aim is to provide Community action plans in an attractive, easy to read, professionally printed format.

Each Community plan is based on the results of Community

engagement exercises carried out by communities themselves, together with any other available reports. This process ensures that the plans are truly Community-led.

This information can now guide the Community and Community Planning Partners in drawing up detailed action plans to implement the top priorities as well as addressing the other issues which have been identified. For each priority or issue this will involve agreeing who should be involved, what resources will be needed and target dates for completion. It is

hoped that this process will be driven by representatives of the Community with support – moral, technical and financial – from the relevant partners.

It is important that this booklet is seen by all concerned as an account of the Community's views at the time of the latest consultation, and that it will have to be regularly reviewed and updated. As some projects are completed, other issues will arise and take their place in future versions of the Community plan.

Thanks are due to the people of Tarland who contributed to the development of the plan and the actions proposed. Also to all the others who helped them in this exercise.

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